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CIA's Casey dines on his critics STAT

A man in California has been convicted of kidnapping a young woman and holding her for seven years as a sex slave, committing several arcane manners of the untoward upon her.

And at one point in the trial, there was testimony that he even forced her to do macrame.

Now comes the Soviet KGB return-coat, Vitaly Yurchenko, to swear before the assembled press of the world that not only was he kidnapped by the CIA and psychologically brutalized, he was — *forced to dine with CIA Director William Casey.*

Lord, a fate worse than macrame.

Remember Casey? Early on in the Reagan administration he was an object of no small scrutiny — a throwback cold warrior whose main claim to intelligence credentials was a stint in the old Office of Strategic Services, away back in World War II. Many feared he would drive the CIA into who-could-tell-what misadventures, a return to the days of the CIA as bull in the world china shop.

But the members of Congress who were making runs at Casey soon gave up the sport. As he had been in business and in his other public careers, Casey in the CIA proved to be a bite-and-gouge fighter. He answered even light jabs with megaton ripostes.

As Sen. David Durenberger, the Republican chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, has now been reminded. After the last flick of Yurchenko's coattails over the horizon, Durenberger made a relatively mild comment to the effect that perhaps Congress should pay a little renewed attention to the CIA. Were matters there going as well as they should?

It was a reasonable question after a KGB defector had just faked the agency out of its shoes with a simple head feint. But Casey came roaring from his cave breathing fire,



like a dragon that had just had all the knights in Christendom called out against him. Durenberger, Casey charged, had repeatedly compromised U.S. intelligence sources and methods, had misspoken in ways that undermined CIA morale, was trading in unsubstantiated charges, etc.

Durenberger, sensibly wishing to keep his nose and ears attached to his head, has pretty well drawn back. But the nasty little moment serves to point up the amazing degree to which the Reagan administration has managed to escape the kind of inspection and second-guessing that were the lot of the Nixon, Ford and Carter tenures.

Casey's CIA has come under some question around Washington for the quality of its intelligence analyses, though in deference to the personality of the director the questioning is discreet to the point of being craven. Casey's CIA was the mastermind of the boneheaded mining of Nicaraguan harbors, a foolishness that landed America in the World Court, and it was behind the publication of a comic-book-like pamphlet teaching murder. Now, the Yurchenko screw-up.

These affairs would have been enough to get past CIA directors barbecued over the congressional open-pit fire. Casey just sits there, scowring and unpleasant and even the members who have the temerity to bring up such questions do not have the stick-to-it-iveness to insist on answers.

Yet few enterprises of the government are as basic to U.S. interests in the world than intelligence gathering and analysis. Even absent any incident that could be counted a blunder, the CIA's performance probably ought to be publicly assessed every few years and its director called to a public accounting outside the hothouse intelligence committees.

Certainly the director of a CIA that has miscalculated repeatedly in Central America and that first crowed at a prize KGB defector and now cannot even say whether the fellow was the heavyweight the CIA thought him to be, ought to do a little time in the congressional spotlight. It's as if like the members would have to have dinner with Casey.